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ABSTRACT

Under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), Title I programs are evaluated using standards-based multiple measures. In California, school systems would like to use state standards for the evaluation, but state performance standards are still under development and content standards are very new. The Sacramento City Schools (California) has recently revised its earlier content standards statements to meet the higher state standards now in place, and the school district is working on its performance standards to measure how well it meets the content standards. The Sacramento schools will use the newly adopted State Testing and Reporting (STAR) test in 1998, but it will also use the district's own achievement test, the Sacramento Achievement Levels Test (SALT) for students in grades 4 through 8. The development and use of the SALT tests are described. Emphasis will be on the STAR data for district accountability, but the SALT test information will be used to compare student achievement this year with that of last year. The SALT will probably be a part of the multiple measures mandate of IASA Title I accountability in the future even though STAR becomes the single accountability measure of school and student achievement in 1997-98. Three attachments present a chart of the district's assessment patterns, a description of the kindergarten standard assessment program, and a description of the intermediate grades assessment program. (SLD)

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Implementing Standards-Based Multiple Measures for IASA, Title I Accountability Using Sacramento Achievement Levels Test (SALT)

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Standards-Based Multiple Measures

General Definition

Under the Improving America's Schools Act, Title 1 programs are evaluated using standards-based multiple measures. The words "standards-based multiple measures" can be divided into two parts for purposes of definition. The first segment, "standards-based," presents a particular concern for most of us in California. The standards that we would like to use would be state performance standards. Yet performance standards for the state are still under development. Even content standards for the state were only completed and adopted this school year. Although many districts have worked to develop their own content (and in some cases performance) standards, these standards must still be compared with the state standards in order to ensure that they are equal to or greater than the "world-class" standards adopted by the state. The Sacramento City Schools have recently revised their earlier standards statements to meet the higher state standards now in place. This spring we are working on the performance standards to measure how well we meet the content standards.

In contrast to the challenge that most California districts have in setting acceptable performance standards, the element "multiple measures" is much simpler to define. We define multiple measures as more than one type of assessment for each subject and grade. The harder task comes when we decide how to combine these assessments.

IASA Title I

The provisions of the national Title 1 program also refer to assessment of students at and above grade level. Yet these provisions also require multiple measures. This suggests that some determination of "grade level" performance should be made on each of these measures. Our early work on standards--how good is good enough--led to a quasi-determination of "at and above grade level" in which the 50th percentile on a standardized test is used as the proxy for "grade level." Even this degree of specificity is only useful for one of the two or more multiple measures. When we combine the standardized measure with at least one additional measure that is not standardized, the issue of how to weight each of these measures becomes important.

Accountability

To be accountable, districts and schools must combine data from multiple measures and then apply some procedure to determine whether the result shows grade level performance. If the standard for grade level is not adequate, reports from different districts will be difficult to combine in a meaningful way. While California is currently using the 50th percentile on a standardized test to represent grade level, this standard may be offset depending upon the weight placed on the other assessments making up the multiple measures.

Taking the notion of accountability further, the application of accountability systems will differ between those systems used in individual districts, those endorsed by the state and those applied in the Title 1 program. Each of these applications of accountability is described below.

Title I System

Title 1 accountability begins with district or school determinations about what data to include in the multiple measures, how to weight various components and, finally, how to decide what scores or combination of scores will be acceptable as "grade level."

The Title 1 accountability system contains some, but not all of the commonly accepted elements of accountability. The system requires identifying goals/objectives (grade level achievement), monitoring progress and evaluating results. It has a method for identifying schools/districts whose measurement systems show a lack of student achievement improvement from year to year, along with appropriate sanctions to apply if adequate progress is not shown. What it lacks is a procedure for rewarding schools/districts whose measurement systems indicate that adequate progress is being made.

California System

At this time California's accountability system is under development. A proposal for an accountability system, *Steering for Results*, has been made to the State Board of Education. This system would link performance on new state tests to the performance standards for the state. The weaknesses are three: (1) the state performance standards have yet to be completed and adopted; (2) the state performance tests will not be developed until after the performance standards are set (thus will probably only begin in spring 2000); and (3) the state tests will only be at certain grade levels (4/5, 8 and 10). The design of the accountability system, however, includes both constraints for poor performance and rewards for good performance.

Although California's accountability system is not in place, the governor is attempting to show "accountability" through the use of a nationally normed standardized test. The test which was selected is only partially linked or aligned with the state standards. Results from this Standardized Testing And Reporting (STAR) test will be reported on the internet by June 30. School results will show average achievement for "all" students tested--including limited English Proficient students and many special education students.

District System

In the Sacramento City Schools, accountability is coming to have a new, more rigorous meaning. When the state report on *Steering for Results* was completed, the district appointed a task force to expand its accountability emphasis to include elements related to the state proposal--especially looking at the rewards for good achievement and the supports or sanctions to be used for schools with poor achievement.

The district accountability system, however, is not dependent upon either state performance standards or state-developed performance tests. For 1998, the district system will use the newly adopted State Testing And Reporting (STAR) test. This norm-referenced standardized test will be given in California for the first time this spring. While the district accountability system may include additional measures next year (1999), it will focus on just the one test for now (1998).

Although school improvement in achievement will not be known until after the 1999 administration of STAR, schools will be aware of the need to show marked improvement at all achievement levels to earn a positive "School on the Move" designation. Schools will be able to pre-judge their student achievement progress through comparison of 1997 assessments with 1998 assessments using tests other than the state's STAR.

In Sacramento, this spring's district assessment schedule appears like a mosaic picture with only a few pieces missing. That is, there are only a few weeks during the spring months in which assessments will not be scheduled. These are the tests which will be used in addition to the STAR:

- SALT, the district's self-developed achievement test, for students in grades 4-8,
- SABE/2 which will be given to Spanish-speaking students grades 2-11,
- ITBS in grades 2 and 3,
- SAT 9 in grade 1,

- Terra Nova for selected students in grades 9 and 10, and
- Golden State Exams in various subject areas for middle and high school students.

While these tests are staggered during the spring, the variety of schedules required to meet the needs of different school levels and schools with different year-round or regular year calendars presents an interesting mosaic (which may lead to mutiny or manic behavior on the part of the testing staff). *The spring district test schedule "mosaic" is given as Attachment A.*

Sacramento Achievement Levels Test (SALT)

Purpose

In 1995 the district selected a testing program that allows students to take tests at levels that would most accurately measure their achievement. The district was also able to design the tests with items that were aligned with the district curriculum. In addition to the two features mentioned above (students tested at appropriate achievement levels and test items selected to be aligned with curriculum), the tests were specifically designed to be given twice a year to measure student growth in achievement.

Development and Initial Use

This assessment program process, purchased through the Northwest Evaluation Association, allowed teachers to select items from extensive item pools developed and calibrated over the past ten or more years. Teachers were able to identify those items that were most appropriate for the district curriculum in use at that time. The tests were administered to about one-half of the schools on a pilot basis in the fall of 1995, and were used district-wide for students in grades 3-8 in the spring of 1996.

Approval by State

These tests, named the Sacramento Achievement Levels Test (SALT), were submitted to the state for use in the state incentive testing program that began in 1996. The district received approval for SALT use in the 1996-97 school year, and the tests were administered in grades 2 through 8 in the fall and the spring.

Use in 1997-98: Student Growth

During the summer of 1997 the district's assessment program schedule was put on hold because of the uncertainty about the governor's proposal for a new Standardized Testing And Reporting (STAR) test. By August it was known that the governor's test would have to be given in the spring of 1998, but the test was not specified until mid-November. In the meantime, our year-round schools had given the district's SALT test. The introduction of a new reading program with stringent evaluation requirements led to using a new test, the ITBS, in grades 2 and 3 during the fall.

As we considered how we could be accountable for student achievement and improvement in other grades, we proposed giving the SALT tests in grades 4-8 again in the spring of 1998. Although this would mean two standardized tests in the spring, it would be the only way we could have an improvement measure between 1997 and 1998. Although there was some concern about over-testing, it was also apparent that the SALT test could be given earlier than the STAR, with results returned to schools in time for use in writing school improvement plans. Further, giving SALT early would be a good preparation for students in taking a standardized test. We would also be able to give parent achievement reports before the end of the school year.

As schools considered the benefits of getting SALT information on student growth in grades 4-8, half of them asked to give the ITBS in the spring to the students in grades 2 and 3. And finally, to evaluate the new district reading program, first grade students are also to take the SAT 9, Form S (The STAR test of SAT 9 is Form T); and 9th and 10th grade students in a special reading program are talking the Terra Nova.

District Picture for 1997-98

Strong Focus on Reading and Math

Sacramento's strong focus on reading and math is best expressed in two of its "vital signs" of desired district performance:

- By 2001, 9 out of 10 students will meet reading proficiency standards.
- By 2001, 9 out of 10 students will meet math proficiency standards.

Although these proficiency standards are not clearly expressed at this time, the common understanding is that student performance should match or exceed grade level performance. As described above, the 50th percentile has been used as the cut point for grade level.

One Measure Among Many

In this first year of unwavering emphasis on improving student achievement, the new state STAR test will be the district accountability test used to determine relative school standings in meeting reading and math proficiency standards. Although SALT test information will be available, it will not be used to determine the level at which a school is achieving. The SALT test information will be used, however, to provide an indication about how students at each school are progressing--a "first look" at how much progress the school might need to make to be considered a "school on the move" in our accountability system.

In addition to these standardized, norm-referenced tests, the district uses a number of instructionally based, criterion-referenced assessments during the course of each school year. These assessments may differ by grade level, but they provide teachers and principals with the monitoring and progress measures necessary for a functional accountability system. These instructional assessments are closely related to the instructional materials in use and to the district's curriculum guides.

In the elementary grades, kindergarten through grade 6, the instructional assessments cover phonemic awareness, phonics, reading accuracy, reading comprehension, spelling, writing and mathematics. In the secondary grades, seven through twelve, the instructional assessments include various subject-matter tests (including the district's algebra test) and quarterly or semester exams designed by teachers.

Interest in Growth and Individual Student Progress

Although emphasis will be on the STAR data for district accountability, the SALT test information will be studied for each grade, 4 through 8, to compare student achievement this year with the achievement shown last year. For about seventy-five percent of the students, we will have spring 1997 data to use to study student growth during the year to spring 1998. The class and student growth information is most useful for principals to use on a class by class basis. With this assessment information principals are able to determine special student needs or classroom inadequacy that may be masked by a grade level aggregation. The subscore SALT analysis by content clusters will also be crucial as we determine curriculum weaknesses.

We will conduct a number of comparability studies during the summer between SALT, ITBS, Terra Nova, SABE/2 and the STAR test (the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition).

Variable Interpretation of "Grade Level" Standards

Several years ago we adopted an interpretation of "grade level" performance on standardized tests as student performance at or above the fiftieth percentile. While we acknowledge that this scheme has inherent weaknesses, it is easily used and interpreted. It is also very similar to the standard that we used previously to identify students who needed Title 1 services (that standard was for a number of years the 40th percentile and then it, too, was raised to the 50th percentile).

We have used the fiftieth percentile to present data on student achievement in our schools for the past four years. Most of our schools have most of their students below grade level according to this standard.

When we added various instructional assessments to our reporting of student achievement, we established a way of weighting each assessment in terms of student mastery. To be considered as "at grade level or above" a student had to have done well on the standardized assessment (SALT) and also on most of the instructional assessments. *Examples of grade level instructional assessment weightings are given in Attachments B and C.*

State/National Interest In Relative School Achievement And Improvement

As state and national interest in school achievement and improvement increases, the reporting of school performance by some type of test scoring process also increases. In California, we have one process for determining school achievement specified by Title 1 and another process that will be used by the governor in making state judgments about the academic quality of our schools. (The third process, *Steering by Results*, has been designed, but will not be operable (if adopted) for several years.)

The Title 1 process still allows each school district to specify what assessments will be used and what standard of "grade level" will be used. The anticipated California governor's process will take a single score at each grade level (or possibly totaled for the grades in a school) that includes all students and judge schools according to the STAR score(s). While the ultimate focus will be on school improvement, schools below average on STAR will carry that label for the next year.

So we have at least two processes to report--a Title 1 process requiring multiple measures and a state process based upon a single measure. In the Sacramento City Schools we will also use these two processes--our district single accountability measure based on STAR, and our district multiple measure that will be used for Title 1.

Planning for 1998-99

Renewed District Focus On School Accountability

Increased accountability is becoming not a buzz word, but is becoming the district process for improving our schools. But for accountability to be meaningful at the school site level, schools must have the data that allows them to make corrections and improvements during the year as well as at the end of the year. Schools also need to have the capability to make appropriate changes to better meet student's needs. Without giving schools more opportunities to make the day-to-day decisions that will help them improve the instructional delivery, they should not be expected to be accountable. And with accountability comes the need to sanction poor performance and to reward and recognize good performance.

Use Multiple Measures And Multiple Reporting Schemes

In Sacramento City Schools we are considering which measures will be used in 1999 to assess our priority vital signs in reading and mathematics. While we will be using the state STAR in 1997-98 as the single accountability measure of school and student achievement, we will consider using multiple measures in 1998-99. As we align our assessments with our newly developed performance standards, additional measures may become necessary.

Provide Monitoring Information And Mid-Year Progress Reports

We will be selecting and/or creating assessments to monitor student progress during the year. We will give special attention to mathematics assessments. These instructional assessments will help teachers to monitor student achievement periodically during the year. We will use at least one mid-year assessment (perhaps a form of SALT) to give principals and administrators information about how well students are learning the skills needed for each grade--the skills specified in our district performance standards and the skills that will be assessed in the state STAR test later in the spring.

Make Change Meaningful

I believe we will see continual change in the assessments and the way in which assessment information is gathered during the next five years. This can be seen as a very positive move on behalf of student achievement. Indeed, if only one assessment were to be used exclusively, there is no doubt that classes throughout the state would be studying all year long for that test. As we see the current California picture, districts will be considering multiple ways of assessing their district's and the state's content and performance standards. At the governor's level, the STAR will be augmented to reflect more of the state's standards. And the California Department of Education will begin developing tests to assess the performance standards in grades 4/5, 8 and 10.

Multiple measurements and increased accountability will continue to be a part of the educational scene. Our task as educational leaders is to make them as meaningful for classroom instruction as possible. To this end I prescribe these nine practices:

1. Clearly define the student learning and achievement expectations for the district
2. Promote the use of classroom instructional assessments throughout the year to monitor student learning
3. Encourage teachers and principals to use classroom instructional assessments to make changes during the year in the instructional delivery
4. Periodically collect assessment data and feed them back to teachers, parents and principals so that student performance lacks and achievements are known during the year
5. Include the "grade level" performance standings for students in reading/language arts/English and mathematics as part of the student report card
6. Relate student assessments to students to help them know their learning successes and needs --and to develop the rationale for doing well on all assessments
7. Have a plan for recognizing and rewarding schools that achieve high performance standards or show gnificant improvement from year to year
8. Have a plan for supporting or reconstituting schools that are not able to achieve high performance standards or that fail to show significant improvement from year to year.
9. Provide principals and school staffs with ability to make the decisions (and pay for them) that will improve the instructional delivery and/or program for students

Spring Assessment Mosaic

	Feb.	Early Mar.	Late Mar.	Late Apr.	Early May	Late May
1-3	IPT			SABE	SAT9	ITBS
4-6	Span. SALT	IPT	SALT	SABE	SAT9	
7-8	Span. SALT	IPT	SALT		SAT9	
9-12	IPT	SABE		SAT9	Golden State	Golden State
YR	SABE	SALT	SALT	SAT9	SAT9	ITBS

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Kindergarten Standard Assessment Program: 7 of 9

Assessment	Score/Weights	Schedule
Pre-Reading Skills Test #1: Print Concepts	16/16 = 1 point	1st trimester
Pre-Reading Skills Test #2: Phonemic Awareness	36/48 = 1 point	1st Trimester: Tasks A, B, C; 2nd Trimester Tasks D, E, F
Pre-Reading Skills Test #3: Name Writing	2/2 = 1 point	1st Trimester: First Name, 2nd Trimester: Last Name
Pre-Reading Skills Test #4: Letter Identification, Upper Case	23/26 = 1 point	2nd Trimester
Pre-Reading Skills Test #5: Letter Identification, Lower Case	23/26 = 1 point	2nd or 3rd Trimester
Pre-Reading Skills Test #6: Sound Identification	16/20 = 1 point	3rd Trimester
Pre-Reading Skills Test #7: Story Retelling	4/6 = 1 point	2nd Trimester 3rd Trimester
Open Court Writing: First-Step Story	Good or better = 1 point	3rd Trimester
San Diego Quick Test: Pre-Primer Words	8/10 = 1 point	3rd Trimester

4th to 6th Grade Standard Assessment Program: 7 out of 9

Assessment	Score/Weights	Schedule
SALT Reading	75th percentile and up = 4 points 50th -74th percentile = 3 points 40th-49th percentile = 2 points 30th-39th percentile = 1 point	March 23 to April 3
District Writing Assessment	Score of 4 or 5 = 2 points; score of 3 = 1 point score of 0-2 = 0 points	3rd Trimester
San Diego Quick Test: Grade Level Words	8 out of 10 grade level words = 1 point	3rd Trimester
Oral Reading Fluency Performance/Graded Houghton Mifflin Prompt at grade level	At or above mid-year (4.5 or 5.5 or 6.6 as appropriate) = 1 point	3rd Trimester
Scholastic Spelling Test	80% correct = 1 point	3rd Trimester

Attachment C